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AN ADDRESS
ON
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,

BY
WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., LL.D.

DELIVERED
AT FRANKLIN AND MARSHALL COLLEGE, LANCASTER, PA., ON THE
CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDATION,
1787-1887.

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WILLIAM PEPPER, M. D., LL. D.,
*Provost and Professor of Theory and Practice of Medicine,
University of Pennsylvania.*

THIS decade will pass down to history as our Centennial Epoch. Beginning with the National movement, which culminated in the World's Fair at Philadelphia, when for the first time we gave to the astonished world the evidence of our mastery over the material difficulties with which we had contended for a century, we have passed in review the leading incidents of those marvelous years from 1776 to 1786, which witnessed the successful struggle of the infant Republic for existence. Many of the minor celebrations have possessed more than a local or than even a State

interest, owing either to the importance of the original incident, the magnitude of the principle illustrated by it, or the distinction of the leading actors who played parts in it.

We have been brought to realize, as could have been done in no other way, the richness and picturesqueness and dramatic interest of the history which America has already created. It seems fortunate indeed, on the threshold of a new Century of National life, when we are confronted with many grave problems, widely different from, but no less momentous than, those which have thus far taxed the energies of the Nation, that pause should be given to our eager steps, and that our closest attention should be drawn to the character, the methods, and the deeds of those great men, the founders of our Government, to whom we and the whole world owe so weighty a debt of gratitude.

We are met here, in this famous old city, to celebrate such an incident, of striking historic interest not only on account of its date, but of the principles it illustrated, and of the men whose names are inseparably connected with it.

I have been invited, most courteously, by the learned Faculty and the distinguished friends of Franklin and Marshall College, to speak briefly of

him to whom we owe the foundation of this venerable institution. I am well aware that this invitation was addressed, not so much to me personally, as to the office which I have the honor to hold in connection with another, and yet more venerable institution of learning, which owes even more to the genius and the wise enterprise of Franklin. And, although I was well aware how vain it were for me to attempt to add to the interest of this occasion by any tribute I might pay to that illustrious man, I could not deny myself the gratification of appearing here to attest my veneration for him, and my cordial brotherly sympathy with the able, earnest men who are prosecuting zealously the good work started here a hundred years ago.

I may not even attempt to sketch the salient features of the rare character, or to enumerate the leading achievements of the almost unique life of our great scientist, statesman and philosopher. We may be assured that could he be cognizant of what we here do and say, no celebration were less to his favor than a panegyric on himself. But how good it were if, while our minds and hearts are full of what he was, and of what he accomplished, we could for the moment acquire some closer touch with his spirit, and have some clearer view of the difficulties and duties which press around us from the stand-

point of that broad tolerant wisdom which was so peculiarly his own. There are not many of the great ones who have entered the Temple of Fame, whom we should feel wholly safe in recalling to this lower life; some for their own sake, possibly more of them on our account. But no one would hesitate to recall a man whose unceasing work, until the last hour of a life prolonged far beyond the wonted term, was the service of humanity, and who could write at the beginning of the story of his life, in which all is recorded with unsparing candor that, "I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. But though this were denied, I should still accept the offer." How often, and how pleasantly he returns to this thought, as when, while in England, after repeating successfully the experiment of reviving, by exposure to the rays of the sun, three flies which had been drowned in a bottle of Madeira, he moralizes thus, "I wish it were possible, from this instance, to invent a method of embalming drowned persons in such a manner that they may be recalled to life at any period however distant; for having a very ardent desire to see and observe the state of America, a hundred years hence, I should prefer to any ordinary death the

being immersed in a cask of Madeira wine with a few friends, till that time, to be then recalled to life by the solar warmth of my dear country." Indeed, as he had lived from early life to old age, as a man who thought that nothing human could be foreign to him; and had realized by his own exertions that ideal of liberal education described by Huxley, by so training himself in youth that his body was the ready servant of his will, and did with ease and pleasure all the work it was capable of; and had in all stages of his advancement retained his pride in the honest toil of his early manhood, being wholly free from petty arrogance; and had above all things labored for the welfare of mankind, looking forward with sublime confidence to the growth of peace, prosperity and goodness among men,—he was one who might return at any time to find himself again among friends, and to be able intuitively to adjust himself to the new ways of the once familiar planet.

He would rejoice, unspeakably, to find the second century of our Nation's life begun with the Union which he did more than any other man to institute, cemented eternally and indissolubly by the tears of brethren embracing after fratricidal strife.

Eminently practical in statescraft, as in all else, he perceived, with the instinct of genius, that in organization and union lie all strength and endur-

ance. "I have long been of opinion," he wrote to Lord Kames in 1761, "that the foundations of the future grandeur and stability of the British Empire lie in America," and as Parton truly says, "his entire influence, and all the resources of his mind were employed, from the beginning of the controversy in 1765, to the first conflict in 1775, to the one object of healing the breach and preventing the separation." Even at that early day he saw clearly, and outlined distinctly, the grand conception of an Imperial Federation of Great Britain and the Colonies, toward which, after one hundred years of delay, steps are beginning to be taken; and in 1775, when almost despairing of making any impression on the crass ignorance and prejudice and class privilege then dominant in England, he brought forward his bold plan for the union of the Colonies, including Ireland and Canada, to last until Great Britain should cease to oppress, and make restitution for past injuries; failing which it should endure forever.

When convinced that perpetuation of the union with Great Britain was hopeless, though he shed tears over the destruction of that exquisite work, the British Empire, he threw himself with unabated vigor into the contest for freedom. Though old and separated from family, friends and country, he

adhered to his determination "with a firmness which neither the advances of England, nor the adversity of America, could shake." (Sir James Mackintosh.)

Providence spared him to return to America to revive, for the purpose of uniting the thirteen states, the scheme of Union proposed by himself in 1754, and to overcome by his wise counsels and adroit expedients, all opposition to the adoption and final ratification of the Constitution.

When, in next September, the representatives of the several states shall meet in Philadelphia to celebrate the Centennial Anniversary of this deed of ratification, the final and most important scene of this period will be enacted ; and in that celebration large space should be made for the recital of the part played by Franklin, who shares with Washington the immortal glory of winning and of keeping our freedom and our Union.

But do we not need his spirit of wise conciliation, of moderation, and of firm regard for the equal rights of all men, as much to-day, as they were needed in those perilous times of old? The days of our worst political dangers may be passed, but we have to face the struggle with social and economic dangers no less menacing. If Franklin performed invaluable services to his country by

educating the people in a knowledge of their political rights, and by advocating these at all times and in all places, until finally the aid and friendship of the most powerful nations were secured, he was even more conspicuously useful as the teacher of religious toleration, of sound morality, and of that shrewd, practical common sense, which recognizes self interest as the mainspring of human action, but which, at the same time, enlarges and enlightens the conception of self-interest.

When Voltaire and Franklin embraced, amid the plaudits of the thronged French Academy, one saw the contact of the most powerful destructive and dissolving force, and the most constructive and conservative force then existing. Each had his great work to do for the amelioration of the human race, and there are not a few points of resemblance between these remarkable men, but their fields of action, and the masses to be moved, and the points of attack were so different, that it led them to widely different methods.

Franklin was admirably equipped as a popular teacher. Long study of the best models of English prose, aided by his fine literary sense, gave him a style unsurpassed for clearness and directness; while his rich vein of humor, his command of satire, of anecdote, and of terse, sententious phrase, enabled

him to convey large truths in such portable and attractive forms, that his teachings soon spread far and wide, and fixed themselves in the memory and speech of men. But here, as in all cases, that which gave most weight to his teachings were the character and the life of the teacher.

He made the newspaper press a power for good, as it had never been before; and he set the example, and adhered to it throughout his editorial career, of preserving the columns of his paper free from all libelling and personal abuse, and all purveying to the prurient taste of a section of the community.

He was ever ready to recognize a public need, whether of school or library or hospital, and to devote his time, his energy, his money, to supplying the deficiency.

No man can carry through such public movements who is not himself liberal, and who does not give his full share in every way to support the enterprise. While the author of "Poor Richard" taught all classes alike the value of money, the duty of economy, the pride of independence, and the nobility of labor, and often by language or simile which may be misconstrued so as to advocate parsimony, the same self-taught, self-made man was incessant in all good and liberal deeds.

He recognized early the advantages of co-operation, and his treatment of deserving workmen is a suggestive point in the history of the relations of Capital and Labor. Our greatest problem of to-day has to deal with these relations. Our very prosperity forces it into greater prominence. The liberty and political rights of the individual give to it unprecedented urgency and importance. It may not be settled by force, nor by legislation, nor even by the church; but I believe it will be settled peaceably and lawfully, and to the mutual advantage of all concerned, by a wide extension of the principle of organized co-operation, based upon a humane yet shrewd calculation of the self-interest of both parties to the bargain; and I am glad to believe that as Franklin would have delighted to aid in consummating this, his spirit, and the influence of his teachings yet survive among us to assist in its realization, and to remind us that toil, thrift and temperance, with true humanity, are the key-notes of the successful solution of this great problem.

Lord Brougham wrote, "One of the most remarkable men, certainly of our times, as a politician, or of any age as a philosopher, was Franklin, who also stands alone in combining together these two characters, the greatest that man can sustain, and in this, that having borne the first part in en-

larging science by one of the greatest discoveries ever made, he bore the second part in founding one of the greatest empires in the world." A mere enumeration of the notable scientific publications of Franklin would be too large for my purpose. All that it behooves us to do is to strive to appreciate the quality of this work, and the fact that it was done without encouragement or assistance, with the simplest self-made apparatus, and in the midst of distracting and absorbing business or political affairs. A keen observer by nature, he had trained himself to such incessant activity of mind, and to the employment of so pure an inductive method, that scarce anything escaped him, and every phenomenon observed started a train of philosophic reasoning so clear, so direct, and so well confined to the limits of the probable and the demonstrable, that he was capable of securing astonishing scientific results with means apparently most inadequate. The only period of his life when he gave himself up in any sense to scientific investigation, the only period during which he was not distinctively engaged in some other absorbing pursuit, were the five years, 1747 to 1752, when he began to enjoy the leisure earned by hard but profitable work. All know the outcome of this investigation, and that the discoveries made by Franklin in elec-

tricity, from their entire originality, the breadth and boldness of the generalization upon which they were based, the accuracy and conclusive nature of the experiments by which the hypotheses were established, the important practical results indicated by him, and the still more important results which have followed the further prosecution of the same study, have conferred immortality upon him, and placed him in the front rank of the natural philosophers of all times.

Our amazement cannot be restrained when we reflect that this work was accomplished before he was forty-seven years of age, and that never again did he, who was then incomparably the most eminent American, and whose rank among European celebrities speedily rose to the highest point, have an opportunity of applying himself continuously to scientific research, although from that time to his death, at the age of eighty-four, he continued to produce remarkable scientific papers containing original observations, or striking generalizations, showing that the philosophic faculty was in vigorous action. It is idle to speculate upon what results might have followed a continuance of Franklin's scientific investigations. It has been granted to but few men to arrive at even a single discovery of such importance as that on which his scientific fame

chiefly rests ; but in fertility of mind, originality of suggestion, and prolonged intellectual and bodily vigor Franklin appears to stand unrivaled.

We may more reasonably dwell on the joy it would give him could he return to see the position attained by his favorite branch of science, and to note that it is growing to be more and more the useful and reliable servant of man, ministering to his daily wants, and rendering life more enjoyable and more healthy. But still more would he rejoice to see the laboratories erected in all parts of the land, equipped with every appliance for scientific investigation, and crowded with earnest, ingenious students, for some of whom Fame holds high honors. He would feel, and with just pride, that to him more than to any other man, is due the splendid development of the scientific spirit and of scientific education in America ; and that the institutions, the societies, and the libraries he founded, or whose foundation he stimulated, are carrying forward and diffusing with ever increasing force the precious light of scientific truth which he kindled here.

Franklin hated war. He hated it as a Christian, a philanthropist and an economist. He hated unjust taxation scarcely less. To the familiar accusations against these he added one, possibly original with himself, and at least very characteristic of him.

He charged them both with the crime of preventing the birth of children—the one by the downright murder of many men, the other by the interference with the normal ratio of marriages—whose possible services to the world are unknown and well nigh infinite. And this veneration for the possibilities of the young lay at the root of his ardent advocacy of education, equally with his belief in the conservative and elevating influence of all sound knowledge. “What is the use of this new invention?” some one asked Franklin. “What is the use of a new-born child?” was his reply. What, indeed, has not been the use of the loom, or the steam-engine; what not the precious value of a Howard, a Newton, a Franklin?

I have alluded to Franklin’s work as a moralist, a statesman and a scientist; it would be strange indeed, if I were not to speak here of him as an educator and as a philanthropist. He was essentially a self-educated man; and he has left us a charming account of the methods he pursued in educating himself. Some may imagine that much of his characteristic strength and usefulness came from these lessons of early hardship. To me there certainly seems no ground for any such conclusion, in this or other cases, and he certainly did not hold that view. To assert that a great man who has

educated himself is greater on that account involves improbable assumptions. The number of very great men is extremely small. They occur at irregular intervals of time and space. When one such occurs, who, in addition to the other qualities of real greatness, has the added rare quality of determination to improve himself to the utmost, we have the condition produced of a lad with an elective course of studies, secured under the most unfavorable surroundings. Franklin was pre-eminently such a lad. Throughout his life he was unwilling to be "a speckled axe," in allusion to the anecdote in his autobiography of the man who, in buying an axe of a smith, his neighbor, desired to have the whole surface as bright as its edge. The smith consented to grind it bright for him, if he would turn the wheel. He turned, while the smith pressed the broad face of the axe hard and heavily on the stone, which made the turning of it very fatiguing. The man came every now and then from the wheel to see how the work went on, and at length would take his axe as it was without further grinding. "No," said the smith, "turn on, turn on; we shall have it bright by and by; as yet it is only speckled." "Yes," says the man; "but I think I like a speckled axe best." But while here and there lads of rare qualities, but lacking educational facilities, surmount

all obstacles and achieve greatness, the world can never know how many fail to attain their legitimate development. It is true that under no system of education can we expect to produce many such men as Goethe, who graduated at Strasburg; or Voltaire, who studied at the celebrated Jesuit College of Louis le Grand; or Newton, who was an M. A. of Trinity College, Cambridge; or Franklin, who was strictly self educated. But still less can we expect to produce under any one fixed, unvarying educational plan even as many as should appear. No system of education should be devised for the benefit of these rare and exceptional natures; but it is among the positive advantages of a well-arranged elective system of studies that, while it provides for the dull and lazy, it affords the freest facility for the development and expansion of the gifted and the industrious. It is not surprising, therefore, that Franklin, having found in his own case that excellent results were attained by the thorough mastery of English, followed by a study of other modern languages, before taking up the classics, should have been led to the conclusion that such is the natural and best course.

Probably all are familiar with the interesting history of the University of Pennsylvania. It had its origin in the Academy of Philadelphia, which

was founded in 1749 through the exertions of Franklin. In the tract which he published at that time, entitled "Proposals relating to the education of youth in Pennsylvania," he remarks: "The good education of youth has been esteemed by wise men in all ages as the surest foundation of the happiness both of private families and of Commonwealths," and then proceeds to describe with much detail the course of study proposed. It is noteworthy that he gives a foremost place to athletics, providing "that the scholars be frequently exercised in running, leaping, wrestling, and swimming, to keep them in health, and to strengthen and render active their bodies." In this he anticipated the systematic instruction in athletics which has been introduced into our academies and colleges only recently, and after much unreasoning and ignorant opposition. Especial stress is laid on the fulness and thoroughness with which English is to be taught to all students, while in regard to other languages the following is provided: "All intended for divinity shall be taught the Latin and Greek; for physics, the Latin, Greek and French; for law, the Latin and French; merchants, the French, German and Spanish; and though all should not be compelled to learn Latin, Greek, or the modern foreign languages, yet none that have an ardent

desire to learn them should be refused, their English, Arithmetic, and other studies absolutely necessary, being at the same time not neglected." It is needless to point out with what clearness the fundamental principle of elective studies is here recognized, and how thoroughly in accord his conclusions as to the study of languages are with those which are now at last coming gradually to be adopted generally. What followed in the history of the Academy (later the University) may be mentioned briefly, because, if I mistake not, an analogous experience was repeated here in the early days of Franklin College. So little heed was given to the proposals of the original founders as to the pre-eminent position to be held by English studies, that the classicists gradually acquired control of the entire system of education in the institution, and in 1789, the year before Franklin's death, we find him publishing a spirited and forcible protest against a continuance of this perversion of the original trust. It is here that the familiar passage occurs, "at what time hats were first introduced we know not; but in the last century they were universally worn throughout Europe. Gradually, however, as the wearing wigs and hair nicely dressed prevailed, the putting on of hats was disused by genteel people, lest the curious arrangement of

curls and powdering should be disordered ; and umbrellas began to supply the place ; yet still our considering the hat as a part of dress continues so far to prevail, that a man of fashion is not thought dressed without having one, or something like one, about him, which he carries under his arm. So that there are a multitude of the politer people in all the courts and capital cities of Europe, who have never, or their fathers before them, worn a hat otherwise than as a *chapeau bras*, though the utility of such a mode of wearing it is by no means apparent, and it is attended not only with some expense, but with a degree of constant trouble. The still prevailing custom of having schools for teaching generally our children in these days, the Latin and Greek languages, I consider, therefore, in no other light than as a *chapeau bras* of modern literature." It is not impossible that the estrangement of many of the original patrons and trustees of the College, brought about by this departure from the proposed plan, may have aided, to some extent, in causing the House of Assembly to arbitrarily withdraw the charter and estates of the College, thus causing a disastrous interference with its work during several years. And now, after the lapse of a century, we see, as well in the University of Pennsylvania as in other prominent colleges, success beginning

to crown the efforts of those who would insist on a thorough and advanced study of English as one of the essentials for all English-speaking students, while arranging the other languages—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, Italian—in associated elective groups.

But Franklin's deep interest in education was not confined to the great institution of which he had been the founder ; nor was his zeal abated by an absence in foreign countries at different times for nearly thirty years, nor even by the attainment of the full limit of four score years. For a long time he had taken great interest in the welfare of the Germans who formed the bulk of the population in some parts of Pennsylvania. He aided in the establishment of schools for them, and served as a trustee of a society for the benefit of the poor among them ; and in 1787, although in his eighty-first year, he was active in the promotion of the long-cherished scheme of founding a college for the education of young Germans. On March 10th of that year, 1787, an act was passed by the Assembly incorporating and endowing the "German College and Charity School, in the Borough and County of Lancaster," in which act it is recited that the college is established for the instruction of youth in the German, English, Latin, Greek, and other learned languages, in

Theology, and in the useful arts, sciences, and literature." The same act of incorporation states that, from a profound respect for the talents, virtues and services to mankind in general, but more especially to this country, of His Excellency Benjamin Franklin, Esq., President of the Supreme Executive Council, the said college shall be and hereby is denominated "Franklin College." Franklin was the largest contributor to its funds, giving of his moderate fortune the sum of \$1,000, which may be considered large for those days; and still more, when in the spring of 1787 the corner-stone was to be laid in Lancaster, he underwent the pain and fatigue of a journey thither in order to perform that ceremony. The able historians of Lancaster have well described the causes which led the college to languish at first, until an act of the Legislature in 1850, confirmed the union which had been agreed upon, after long negotiations, with Marshall College, founded in 1836, then situated in Mercersburg, and named after the great Chief Justice who is fitly styled "The Expounder of the Constitution." From that time forward, a career of usefulness and prosperity has been pursued by this admirable institution, which honored by its association with two of the wisest and greatest men America has produced; fortunate in the possession of a President and Faculty

renowned as able administrators, sound scholars, and zealous and skilful teachers ; and enjoying every advantage of location and environment, seems surely destined to fill a more and more prominent place among our colleges.

Yet will I be pardoned, I trust, for uttering a word of earnest appeal to those with whom must rest the fulfillment of this destiny. Were Franklin standing now with us, so that he might survey the changes wrought in a century in this college, in this city, and in this grand county of Lancaster, what think you must be his verdict? Though no record is preserved to us of what he said a hundred years ago when the corner-stone of this college was laid, we can scarcely doubt that he dwelt on the vast value to any community of a strong and well-endowed college in their midst ; of the claims which such an institution has upon all classes on account of the benefits, moral, educational and material, which it ensures ; and of the consequent duty which all owe to serve, to support and to strengthen it in all ways possible. He would have said this with eminent propriety and with convincing force, because his whole life, nay, his very presence here, would attest the sincerity of his words.

He was a self-made man, who had known in his youth the extremes of poverty ; he became a suc-

cessful business man with a remarkable capacity for making and saving money ; he knew well the value and importance of money, and the dignity conferred by wealth ; he had every motive to encourage him in a course of keen absorbing gainful business. Yet from his early manhood we see him steadily maintaining a high resolve that his life should not be consumed in the mere pursuit of wealth ; we see him begin early and continue a course of liberal contributions to all worthy enterprises, of religion, charity and education ; we see him always willing to devote a large share of his time and energy and business ability to promote the successful prosecution of such undertakings ; we see him retiring from active business as soon as a handsome competency is secured, in order to devote himself to study and original investigation, and yet ready, again and again, and even when broken with years and suffering, to abandon his well-earned leisure in response to the call of duty to serve the institutions of his city, or the City itself, or the State, or the Nation.

He would see the City of Lancaster grown from 3,300 in 1787 to over 30,000 inhabitants, with taxable property of \$13,000,000 value, and a debt of only \$460,000 ; and spreading around this beautiful and wealthy city, he would see one of the richest do-

mains that earth can boast—a county which is an empire in itself, with a total area of 620,000 acres, of which 556,314 are in farm lands (490,922 of improved acres being divided among 9,070 farmers), valued at \$70,000,000; the farm implements and machinery at over \$2,000,000; the value of the stock almost \$5,000,000; the cost of a single year's building and repairing fences, \$329,790; and the estimated value of one year's product \$9,320,202. The taxable value of the property is \$86,824,823 at a value of two-thirds the real worth, and upon this a levy of two and a half mills collects adequate revenue for all its current expenses.

He would find this splendid territory occupied by a population of over 150,000 (of whom 132,382 are natives and only 7,065 foreign born), sprung from the most sturdy stocks which enter into the formation of our composite race. He would hear many family names, familiar as household words wherever eminence and excellence in social, professional, literary, or religious life are known and appreciated. He would realize that here as well as elsewhere in this country, the first century of national existence has closed on a scene of unexampled prosperity, and that in entering on its second century, it is upon a true Augustan era that the rising sun of our national greatness projects his dazzling rays.

We are happily done with all doubt as to the permanence of our Union or of our form of Government ; we have wiped out the foulest blot on our civilization ; we have developed our material resources until the vast continent is subjugated ; but it remains to be seen if we can cope with the more insidious dangers of luxury and of overflowing wealth ; if we can respond to the call on us for the development of higher and purer types of civic life and organization adequate to the growing needs of our teeming millions ; whether we can retain, amid the allurements of materialism, our hold on the deep-lying verities of life. But when that wise man should see how, in a degree unprecedented in any other age or land, the opening years of this new century are marked by the splendid generosity of individuals who bestow princely benefactions to endow the sacred causes of religion, charity and education ; when he should see religion rendered thereby more tolerant as well as more powerful ; charity more discriminating and truly helpful ; education more broad and liberal and practical ; he would feel his robust faith in mankind strengthened and his unwavering belief in the destiny of America still more firmly rooted.

Men and women of Lancaster, you have here institutions which stand as faithful witnesses of

noble lives consecrated to the public weal, and as silent but convincing appeals to us to bear in mind what they did in the day of small things, that we may be worthy stewards of the larger bounty entrusted to us for a time.







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